

Hot Issues
March 25, 2015

Issue: Camp Minden – Explo Systems, Minden, LA

Message

- Abandoned 15,000,000 pounds of expired Army M6 propellant and approximately 320,000 pounds of CBI at a National Guard Training Base in Louisiana.
- Community objection to controlled open burning, the routine method for DOD disposal of expired propellant.
- The Louisiana National Guard is currently reviewing bids on alternative disposal treatments (versus controlled open burn).

Contact: Carl Edlund, Superfund Division Director (214) 665-6701

Background/Status:

A contractor for the Army, Explo, failed to properly dispose and store of more than 18,000,000 pounds of explosives (15,000,000 pounds from the Army). An Administrative Order on Consent (AOC) was agreed to by the Army, State, and EPA to destroy the propellant by controlled, open burn (Judgment Fund). The community voiced concerns regarding the selected technology. EPA granted a 90 day extension to the AOC deadlines and opened up the disposal technology discussions to include local citizens, elected officials, and other concerned citizens of Louisiana. The Louisiana National Guard is currently reviewing bids on alternative disposal treatments (versus controlled open burn). In addition, EPA has signed additional AOC's with PRPs to address over 3,000,000 pounds of explosive related material at the site.

Issue: Tulane National Primate Research Center Investigation

Message

- EPA, acting as an assisting Federal Agency to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), assisted in the investigation at the Tulane National Primate Research Center (TNPRC) in February of this year. EPA developed a sampling strategy for TNPRC to implement and provided oversight of TNPRC personnel in the collection of environmental samples (air, water and soil) in targeted areas to help determine if the bacteria *Burkholderia pseudomallei* had been released outside of the research facility.
- State of Louisiana and TNPRC continue to request additional assistance from EPA in the development of a decontamination plan for the soils in the field cages and for development of an off-site soils and water sampling plan.

Contact: Carl Edlund, Superfund, 214-665-8124

Background/Status:

In November of 2014 two of the non-human primates (rhesus macaques) at TNPRC were infected with *Burkholderia pseudomallei* (Bp) and one of them was euthanized. According to the CDC Bp is not transmitted between humans or animals so the likelihood of becoming ill from the bacteria is low. TNPRC was unsure how the macaques became infected. CDC and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) were brought in to investigate. In February EPA mobilized to the site and developed a sampling plan for the collection of air, water and soil samples in targeted areas in and around the macaque enclosures where the bacteria would most likely be present were it to have been released outside the laboratory. TNPRC implemented the plan and CDC conducted the analysis. All samples collected were negative for the presence of Bp. On March 13th CDC released a statement saying “CDC has found no evidence to date to suggest the organism was released into the surrounding environment and therefore it's unlikely there is any threat to the general population”.

Issue: Chemical Recycling, Inc. (CRI) Superfund Site

Message

- Elevated levels of lead contaminated soil pose an imminent and substantial endangerment to human health and the environment. Elevated levels will require the contaminated soils to be removed and cleaned up to 800 parts per million (PPM), the EPA Industrial Removal Management Level for lead.
- Local interest in redevelopment of the site and interest from City of Wylie and Congressman Pete Sessions, Texas 32nd District.
- A “Directive Letter” to the Steering Committee’s Facility Coordinator is being prepared for signature. The letter will include a copy of the draft Modification of the 1989 Administrative Order on Consent and a new Action Memorandum based on the 2014 Sampling Event. These documents are anticipated to circulate for concurrence in early April 2015.

Background/Status:

The CRI Site is a former waste disposal facility in Wylie, TX that constructed experimental roads using spent solvents contaminated with lead. In 1990, PRPs completed a removal action under a 1989 AOC that addressed the immediate threat. In 1999, TNRCC noted recently unearthed and re-buried drums at the Site. In 2005, EPA issued an Action Memo to address remaining contamination in soils and pursued an alternate enforcement approach with TCEQ. EPA issued an amended Action Memo in 2006 after unsuccessful alternate enforcement and commenced a new round of negotiations to address remaining contamination. In 2009, TCEQ took the lead for the site and asked EPA not to close the existing AOC. TCEQ returned the lead to EPA in 2014. In July 2014, EPA conducted a sampling event that noted continued elevated lead levels in certain areas of the Site.

EPA has engaged the Chair of the PRP Steering Committee to discuss performance of a follow-up removal action. This effort includes the exchange of draft Statements of Work, draft Modification of AOC and EPA’s estimated oversight costs. EPA anticipates another three to four months to resolve the discussions and finalize negotiations with an amended AOC.

Issue: Libby Asbestos Contaminated Vermiculite Exfoliation Sites

Message:

- EPA's Removal Program has initiated site assessment activities at 15 of the 18 Libby vermiculite exfoliation sites in Region 6. These assessments included both soil sampling and activity-based air sampling (ABS). During ABS, samplers mimic soil-disturbing activity, such as gardening or child's play for residential properties, which may actually be conducted at a location, air samples are collected to determine the potential exposure from aerosolized asbestos fibers.
- EPA has completed removal cleanup activities at three sites and initiated emergency cleanup actions at three other sites where LAA was identified and immediate action was deemed necessary. Plans are being made to conduct a CERCLA fund-lead removal action at one Site. EPA's investigation of potential LAA contamination at three of the 18 sites did not identify LAA in amounts that would present a health risk to the community surrounding the site.
- EPA is currently negotiating with several parties to perform PRP-lead cleanups at four sites.

Contact: Carl Edlund, Superfund Division Director (214) 665-6701

Background/Status: The W.R. Grace owned and operated the Zonolite Mine, located in Libby, Montana. Vermiculite ore was mined for commercial purposes from the 1920's through 1990. Vermiculite, a naturally occurring fibrous mineral, has been used in lawn, garden, agricultural, and horticultural products; thermal and sound insulation; and construction, insulation, and lightweight packing material. Vermiculite from the Libby mine was contaminated with tremolite-actinolite, generally referred to as Libby amphibole asbestos (LAA). Exposure to asbestos is strongly associated with malignant and nonmalignant respiratory diseases, including asbestosis and mesothelioma. Contaminated Libby vermiculite was shipped to exfoliation facilities in numerous locations throughout the United States, and reportedly to 18 exfoliation facilities in Region 6.

Issue: Tronox Navajo Area Uranium Mines (Tronox sites) Removal Assessment/EE/CA and Crossroads Removal Site McKinley County, New Mexico

Message

- Tronox sites (non-tribal) in the Ambrosia Lake Sub-District of the Grants Mining District of northwest New Mexico are in the process of be scheduled for removal assessment and EE/CA process. Work is scheduled to begin in 3rd Quarter 2015.
- New Mexico Removal Sites - A Removal action is being completed on the final of 11 residential Sites (tribal and non-tribal) within the Grants Mineral Belt area of northwest New Mexico.

Contact: Carl Edlund, Superfund Division Director (214) 665-6701

Background/Status:

Tronox sites are former uranium mines that were operated by Kerr McGee on tribal (Navajo) and non-tribal lands in New Mexico and in Arizona. There are 49 mines that have been identified in the DOJ settlement with Anadarko Oil (acquired Kerr McGee) that are eligible for threat abatement and reclamation activities utilizing the settlement trust fund. The mines that are located on private lands in New Mexico are being addressed by Region 6 and the mines that are located on Navajo Tribal lands are being addressed by Region 9. There are 22 mines that Region 6 is addressing and 27 mines being addressed by Region 9.

The Crossroads Site is a residential enclave of primarily Hispanic residents located in McKinley County, New Mexico that was contaminated with excess gamma radiation from mine related wastes from the historic mining operations within the Ambrosia Lake Sub-District. This site is the last of 11 sites that EPA 6 has conducted removal assessments and/or removal actions since 2009. Region 6 has assessed 891 properties and conducted cleanup on 136 of 137 properties that exceeded the cleanup level.

Issue: CES Environmental Services, Inc., Houston, Harris County, TX

Message:

- Bankrupt Chemical Facility (2010) – Significant waste in Aboveground Storage Tanks, Frac Tanks, Vacuum Boxes, Vats, Totes, Drums, Lab Chemicals, and other miscellaneous containers spread out over an 8 acre property.
- Surrounded by EJ Community and School (Significant Chemical Odors) – These properties share a common fence line.

Contact: Carl Edlund (214) 665 - 6701

Background/Status:

A Removal Action started in September 2014 and is ongoing. Statutory maximum funding has been approved (\$2,000,000). Significant waste has been consolidated and disposed via incineration, waste water treatment, deep well injection, fuel blending, solidification/landfill (non-haz), direct landfill (non haz), and encapsulation/landfill. Removal Action anticipated by end of May 2015.

Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs) have been noticed by TCEQ and EPA has also begun the process of noticing PRPs. The TCEQ has a tentative agreement with a PRP Group to take over future response actions at the site upon the conclusion of the EPA Removal Action through the TCEQ Voluntary Cleanup Program (VCP). The Region is in support of the TCEQ VCP process and has been closely involved. The PRP Group is working through the legal issues with the Bankruptcy Estate to end the Bankruptcy Estate control of the property and to transfer the property into a Custodial Trust allowing them the ability to take appropriate actions.

EPA, working closely with TCEQ, City of Houston, Local Residents, and NGO's (Texas Organizing Project, Air Alliance Houston, Texas Low Income Housing Information Service, Trustee, and PRP Group. In recent discussions, the City of Houston and Congresswoman Shelia Jackson Lee have expressed additional interest concerning the site.

As of March 20, 2015, the EPA Removal Program has spent approximately \$ 1,333,063 of the \$ 2,000,000 currently allocated at the site.

Issue: St. Rose, Louisiana Community Air Assessment

Message

- EPA acknowledges that odor experienced within these communities may pose a nuisance and impact quality of life; however, the data collected indicates that levels of hydrogen sulfide, sulfur dioxide and benzene are all under public health levels of concern.

Contact: Carl Edlund, Superfund, 214-665-8124

Background/Status:

On June 8, 2014, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) responded to citizen complaints of an intermittent odor and illnesses in St. Rose, Louisiana. LDEQ identified the Shell/IMTT St. Rose Asphalt Complex as the source of the odor. LDEQ requested EPA assistance in assessing the situation. EPA Region 6 and LDEQ performed air monitoring and sampling in the neighborhoods surrounding the Shell/IMTT facility in St. Rose. LDEQ ordered Shell/IMTT to fix the problem. Citizen complaints continued after mitigation of the odor. At LDEQ's request, EPA R6 performed an independent air assessment of the surrounding communities. EPA R6 completed a 4 day assessment the first week of November 2014. ATSDR Minimal Risk levels (MRLs) were not exceeded for benzene or sulfur dioxide. EPA Region 6 attended a council hearing on February 4, 2015. EPA is working with LDEQ to post the sampling summary on the LDEQ website.